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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "How the Food and Drugs Act Protects our Canned Foods." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

When life doesn't go just right, some human beings in this world are sure to start longing for the good old days. Only yesterday the lady who lives in the white house down our block was telling me how much happier life was a generation or so ago.

"You know, Aunt Sammy," she sighed, "You know that housekeeping is a dreadfully complicated job these days. Years ago it was much simpler and easier."

Now when any woman begins to talk that way to me, I suspect that she needs one of two things -- a vacation or a short course in the history of housekeeping. Anybody can paint a pretty romantic picture of the good old days when, as the rhyme said, the housewife could "sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam and feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream." But the facts of history don't fit that picture. So I mentioned to my friend what I knew about housekeeping in the good old days -- the lack of labor saving devices, the big houses so difficult to clean, the large inconvenient kitchens, the long distances to travel doing housework, the baking, soap-making, drying and canning foods -- all the big jobs that had to be done entirely at home. Then I recalled some of the people who have helped the housewife in recent years -- the specialists in foods, nutrition, clothing, child care and so on; the scientists, the architects, the engineers, the manufacturers, the innumerable people who have given a hand to make the job of housekeeping lighter.

Then I thought of canned foods.

"Do you remember," I asked my friend, "do you remember some twenty-five years ago when we housekeepers looked on all commercial canned food with suspicion? We had good reason. All too often the housewife who bought canned foods found underfilled cans, adulterated foods or even dangerous spoiled products. In those days, we all felt that manufacturers could never put up food equal to home-canned foods."

What a lot has happened in twenty-five years! Today the American housewife can buy the best quality canned foods, preserves, jams, jellies and so on -- in many cases at prices lower than she would pay if she bought the fresh foods and put them up herself. Delicious ripe fruits, appetizing vegetables, soups, meats, fish and shellfish -- all these good foods are now

available anywhere at anytime. In fact, the can opener is one of the most useful of kitchen tools these days.

The American housewife now buys her canned foods with confidence. And the Federal Food and Drugs Act is responsible for this confidence. You see, the Department of Agriculture has been enforcing the Food and Drugs Act for twenty-five years. When it was made effective in 1907, many canners and food manufacturers were violating it in many ways. Honest manufacturers simply couldn't compete with those who gave short measure in cans, packed unfit material or used chemical preservatives to cover up bad canning processes. As a result, people were afraid to use commercially canned products. But today the Food and Drugs experts cooperate with the American canners and, as a result, we have high quality in American canned goods.

One way in which the Food and Drugs Act helped the housewife get her money's worth was to limit the amount of water allowed in canned goods. A generation ago an excessive amount of water -- which is the most common adulterant -- was often used in canned products. By paying food prices for this water, the housewife was really cheated whenever she bought a can of food. This "water tax" could well run into millions of dollars a year, if all manufacturers were to practice "slack filling". (Slack filling is the term used for this excess watering.) Fortunately for the housewife, the law now prohibits adulterating canned foods with water.

Food and drug officials maintain a very rigid inspection service. They inspect not only the foods canned in this country but also those imported from abroad. Foreign products such as canned peas, Brussels sprouts, string beans, cauliflower, mushrooms and other non-acid packs sometimes contain dangerous bacteria. So, inspectors sample, and examine all suspected foods and condemn any that are not up to standard.

And inspectors examine all American canned goods, year in and year out, from Maine to Florida and from California to Washington. Wherever food is canned for the American housewife -- there are the food and drug inspectors, watching, advising and reporting to the district offices in New York, Chicago and San Francisco and to headquarters at Washington, D. C.

There's plenty more to be said about the Food and Drug inspection and other good things that have come in this modern generation. The present day may have its faults, but it's certainly the easiest day yet for the housekeeper who does her own work.

But Arabella over there in the corner has her pencil and paper out. A gentle hint that menu time has arrived. We haven't had a Sunday dinner menu in some weeks, have we? Well, let's plan one this morning. Let's have a good old fashioned Sunday dinner -- Fried chicken; Potatoes with cream gravy; Fresh lima beans; Hot biscuits; Combination vegetable salad, and for dessert, Fresh peach pie.

Once more, I'll go over that menu. Fried chicken; Potatoes; Cream chicken gravy; Fresh lima beans buttered; Hot biscuits; Salad of chopped green pepper, tomato, cucumber and chopped celery on lettuce, and Fresh peach pie.

Yes, I have a recipe for fresh peach pie.

You'll need just six ingredients for this pie:

6 to 8 firm peaches

Pastry

3/4 of a cup of sugar

1/4 teaspoon of cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon of salt, and

2 tablespoons of butter

I'll go over those six ingredients again. (Repeat.)

Pare and slice the peaches. Now, line a deep pie pan with the pastry. Spread a layer of peaches over the bottom. Sprinkle it with a mixture of sugar, cinnamon and salt and dot it with butter. Put on another layer of peaches and more seasoning. Repeat this until all the peaches are used. Then add the top sheet of pastry. Put the pie in a moderately hot oven (400 degrees F.) for 10 minutes. Then lower the oven temperature to more moderate heat (375 degrees F.) and bake the pie for 30 to 35 minutes -- or until the peaches are tender and the crust is golden brown.

A lady in Iowa writes that ever since she bought her new refrigerator she has had trouble with mayonnaise curdling when it stands in the refrigerator. What is the cause of this?

Answer: The extreme cold makes the mayonnaise separate. Better put the dressing away in the warmest part of your refrigerator. That is the lowest shelf in most of the newer models.

Now, what's this lady going to do with the separated mayonnaise?

One remedy is to put about a quarter of a teaspoon of vinegar into a clean bowl with 1 teaspoon of the curdled mixture. Stir this together. Then add more of the mixture. Beat and continue to add it gradually until you have beaten the whole amount together again.

One more salad dressing question.

"Dear Aunt Sammy: I have been making my cooked salad dressing in the upper part of my aluminum double boiler. But lately the dressing always comes out a dark unattractive color. Can you tell me what the trouble is?"

Answer: Dark aluminum may be the trouble. The white acid dressing cooked in a dark aluminum pan will darken as the pan lightens. So be sure the aluminum is bright if you cook salad dressing in it. Cooking the dressing in an enamel cooking utensil will prevent this trouble.

Monday. Some economy news for the home dressmaker.

